

the Zolas returned from M^dan. A fire was therefore lighted in their bedroom — with some difficulty, it would seem, for the chimney did not draw well. This chimney was com-
mon both to the Zolas' bedroom and to some apartments overhead, occupied by other tenants, one of whom had re-
cently had it swept in its tipper part. The sweeping, it is
thought, may have brought down sundry fragments of brick-
work and cement, which remained obstructing the lower
part of the chimney, the Zolas on their side having given
no orders for sweeping it, as, on account of the heating ap-
paratus in the cellars, it was seldom used by them. In any
case, whatever may have been the exact cause, the chimney
was certainly obstructed, and on the evening of September
28 Madame Zola, observing that the fire burnt very badly,
expressed an intention of having the chimney examined by
some workmen who were engaged on various repairs in the
rooms.

She and her husband sat down to dinner that evening
about eight o'clock. They were very hungry and made a
hearty meal. Then, at an early hour, being somewhat tired by
their removal from the country to town, they retired to rest.
At that moment Madame Zola observed that the bedroom
fire was smouldering, and asked her husband if he wished
It to be extinguished. He answered that he did not think it
necessary, for it would soon burn out. Then

one or the other lowered to within a few inches of the ceiling the sheet-iron *tallier*, a kind of screen or shutter with which most French fireplaces are provided. They went to bed and fell asleep, but about three o'clock in the morning Madame Zola suddenly awoke, experiencing a feeling of great oppression. Her head was heavy and she was seized with nausea.